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January 2, 2003

TO: Each Supervisor

FROM: Thomas L. Garthwaite, M.D. 
Director and Chief Medical Officer

SUBJECT: **EMERGENCY DECLARATION REGARDING THE HIV/AIDS
EPIDEMIC IN COMMUNITIES OF COLOR**

On September 28, 2000, your Board unanimously adopted an "Emergency Declaration Regarding the HIV/AIDS Epidemic in Communities of Color in Los Angeles County." The following is an update to our earlier report of July 25, 2002, on the Department's activities that target communities of color, while also providing general Countywide community access to HIV/AIDS services:

- The Los Angeles County Office of AIDS Programs and Policy (OAPP) continues the Los Angeles Perinatal HIV Prevention Program. The project components include: 1) a social marketing campaign; 2) training of promotoras (peer health promoters); and, 3) community outreach. Its overall aim is to create an integrated program that reaches out to HIV positive and pregnant women who are both hard-to-reach and are at risk for perinatal transmission of HIV, but require perinatal care, HIV/AIDS education, HIV counseling and testing, and early intervention and treatment.

The program has trained forty-three promotoras since August 2002. The promotoras have in turn conducted more than 200 outreach programs for women of childbearing age in Los Angeles County, and disseminated over 600 educational materials including promotional bags, brochures, magnets, and posters featuring HIV perinatal prevention messages and hotlines.

All of the promotoras, and the vast majority of the women served by the promotoras, are African-American or Latina.

- OAPP has also expanded the Los Angeles Corrections Demonstration Project in Los Angeles County jails with the California Department of Health Services. The project seeks to improve the health status of inmates with or at high-risk for HIV. The majority are of African-American or Latino descent. OAPP currently funds agencies to provide comprehensive HIV services at five Los Angeles County jail facilities. Three subcontractors provide HIV counseling and testing services; two subcontractors provide health education and risk reduction counseling for HIV positive and high-risk HIV negative clients, as well as treatment education and adherence support for HIV positive clients; and three subcontractors provide transitional case management for HIV positive clients to link them with HIV services in the community post release. The budget for this program was increased by the State of California to an annual \$722,000, an increase of \$222,000 compared to the previous year.

OAPP continues to nurture and strengthen community-based organizations in the African-American and Latino communities through its Capacity-Building Initiative (CBI) launched in August 2001. Particular emphasis is placed on developing their community capacity for increased awareness, leadership, participation, and support for HIV prevention and care services. Service provider networks designed to streamline access to sources of care and prevention in seven of the eight service planning areas (SPAs) in Los Angeles County are in their initial phases. Technical support is being introduced under a second phase to include six executive directors' forums designed to inform, support, and build linkages for CBO directors as part of an ongoing effort to build partnerships that target traditionally hard-to-reach populations in Los Angeles County with culturally competent services.

OAPP was recently awarded its first grant from the Office of Minority Health to expand the CBI. I expect that the grant award will be presented to your Board for acceptance early in 2003.

OAPP continues its fair share method in allocating funds for HIV/AIDS services in Los Angeles County. The formula which is based on the current AIDS cases, poverty, and AIDS cases in the last two years tries to assure that funding tracks new cases by allocating resources to areas of most need, which in Los Angeles County are increasingly communities of color. OAPP is currently working with Altamed Health Services to add HIV services to its site in the El Monte Health District of SPA 3, as well as with AIDS Healthcare Foundation on its new site in the El Monte Health District.

- The Los Angeles Gay and Lesbian Center, an OAPP community-based partner and collaborator in the Prevention for HIV Infected Persons Project (PHIPP), launched the Positive Image Consortium with a group of diverse community organizations to provide multiple prevention interventions in communities of color. The Consortium develops curricula and designs innovative programs to facilitate the participation of high impact HIV-positive communities of color, provides HIV counseling and testing services at alternative sites, offers group and community-level interventions, and develops related social marketing projects targeted to reach individuals throughout Los Angeles County.

OAPP, along with its community partners, participated in World AIDS Day events on December 1, 2002. The events sought to raise awareness about the global AIDS pandemic and its impact especially in the Los Angeles community. An event sponsored by OAPP served as one of the “anchor” events of a continuing HIV/AIDS social marketing campaign to re-invigorate the discussion of HIV/AIDS and re-engage the community in HIV prevention and education efforts.

OAPP worked with more than forty African-American churches to incorporate HIV awareness and prevention activities in their services on World AIDS Day, and has begun a project in collaboration with the State Office of AIDS to identify faith-based partners in Latino communities.

- OAPP continues to sponsor and participate in various other outreach activities and events that promote HIV counseling and testing awareness in communities of color in Los Angeles County. They include the following:

Latin Pride: OAPP, along with two other community-based agencies, participated in the Latin Pride event on August 4, 2002. The event featured a series of symposia, arts and cultural presentations, reception panels, press conferences, and community forums to promote activism and raise awareness about HIV/AIDS in the Latino community. It also served as an expression of cultural diversity and uniqueness through social interaction, music, dance, the arts, and a taste of the rich heritage found throughout Latin America, Latin Europe, and the United States.

The Wall-Las Memorias: OAPP co-sponsored the second annual “Latino Celebrity Challenge: Strike Out AIDS” event organized by The Wall-Las Memorias Project on September 7, 2002. The event served as a tool for community awareness and education about HIV/AIDS in the Latino community and also created a platform for community dialogue around the local HIV/AIDS epidemic.

This summary concludes our reports in response to the September 28, 2000 emergency declaration by your Board. The Department will provide a revised edition of “State of an Epidemic” in early 2003. Annual updates to this document will provide ongoing reports on changes in the populations of people with HIV/AIDS in Los Angeles County, as well as the responses of the Department to those changes.

If you have any questions or need additional information, please let me know.

TG:clh

c: Chief Administrative Officer
County Counsel
Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors